

INTERNATIONAL CITY MANAGERS' ASSOCIATION

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MUNICIPAL RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL

What is involved in comprehensive records management? What are the organization, methods, and procedures for control, storage, and disposal of municipal government records?

This report is based in part on a three-year program recently completed in a city of approximately 100,000 in setting up a system for the control of municipal records. The work was carried on under the close supervision of the assistant city manager who made an extensive study of records control programs in several governmental agencies and in private industry. This report, therefore, summarizes actual experience in a city government and discusses the scope of a records management program, organization for records management and control, the design of records and organizations for their control, establishment of records retention periods, disposition and transfer of records, and operations of a records center. The supplement to this report discusses forms used in inventory and control of records.

Many executives consider a clean-topped desk as a symbol of efficiency, as evidence of their ability to free themselves of paper work so as to devote their time to over-all problems and policies. Yet the work of executives is cluttered with paper, and government and business both move on a flood of paper. The introduction of carbon paper in the nineteenth century ushered in what Luther Gulick has called the "carboniferous and neo-lithographic age." The development and refinement of office duplicating machines has also contributed greatly to the torrent of paper work.

Paper work is considered the least efficient operation in industry and government, and only in recent years has it been given the attention it deserves. Progressive managements have begun to realize that a full wastebasket is a significant symbol of executive efficiency, because of the importance of destroying records as quickly as their usefulness is outlived.

The over-all significance of record keeping in our economy is indicated by the increase in the number of clerical workers, of which the largest portion is devoted to the making and keeping of records. Today there is one office worker to every eight on the production line, while in 1900 there was only one office worker to every 30 at the work bench. In 1920, employees in manufacturing industries outnumbered clerical workers by about four to one; today the ratio is only two to one.

Another indication of the importance of records management is the cost of creating and filing office papers. It has been estimated that it costs about \$1,000 (including salaries of dictator and stenographer) to create the 1,330 letters of outgoing correspondence for which carbon copies are found in the average file drawer; this excludes the incoming correspondence and other materials also filed in the average file drawer, which holds from 3,000 to 4,000 documents. The annual cost of operating one four-drawer file (including file

clerk salary, floor space, supplies, and one-tenth of the cost of the file cabinet) is estimated at from \$88 to \$640, with the average cost running about \$200.

A constructive impetus for efficient records management has been the work of the National Records Management Council, organized in 1947 with a Rockefeller grant of \$35,000. Its former director, Emmett J. Leahy, directed the task force on records management for the Hoover Commission. The Council has made records management installations for the cities of New York and San Francisco, the state of Michigan, and numerous large corporations, which have uniformly led to destruction of up to one-half of accumulated records and the slashing of records keeping costs.

What Are Records ?

The term "records" is a common one, and roughly it is well understood, but the term needs clarification in planning a records management program and in considering values and legal responsibilities. As generally used in government, "records" refers to any written or graphic materials that accumulate in public business and give evidence of activities. Records include the everyday working files of government, plus the more formal reports, legal documents, and other instruments prepared to represent findings, recommendations, and actions, or to affect other administrative purposes.

Most legal definitions emphasize three salient points: (1) records are of various physical types including papers, books (except library materials), maps, still or motion photographic films and prints, and sound recordings; (2) records are created or received in the course of public business; and (3) records are filed or preserved as evidence of transactions or for their informational value.

Single copies are usually meant, not supplies of items printed or otherwise duplicated for general distribution. Master files of these in producing offices, however, may be regarded as records. Two or more copies of the same document may be records because they are filed in different offices or serve different purposes. But copies (usually carbons) sent to another office solely for information and not action, and some ephemeral material, may at the discretion of the administrator be discarded without ever being filed. This definition for purposes of a records management program is much broader than legal definitions of "public records" which must, under state and local laws, be retained for long periods of time and be available for public inspection.

The importance of the custody and retention of records is evident from the serious legal penalties attached to "wilfully and unlawfully concealing, removing, mutilating, obliterating, falsifying or destroying" records, to quote from a typical law. Such laws exist because records are the means by which public officials in a democracy render accountings to the people. They also protect legal rights of countless citizens. They are important tools of administration and the sources of many kinds of information. They may be termed the "official memory" of an organization.

Scope of Records Management Program

Records Control. This is a program governing the retention and destruction of records and the storage of inactive records. The initial goal of a records management program should be the inventory of existing records, particularly those which are inactive and "dead," in order to dispose of those which are

valueless, to identify and organize for reference uses those which have value, and to prevent the future retention of records beyond their period of usefulness. The balance of this MIS report is devoted almost entirely to a program for records control.

Forms Control. Printed and duplicated forms constitute a high percentage of the records requiring control. The records control program is made easier if "birth control" is exercised over the creation of forms. Forms control seeks elimination of unnecessary forms, consolidation where possible of related forms, better design of forms for easier use, and selection of paper and ink of a quality in keeping with retention periods determined under the records control program (See MIS Report No. 81, "Control of Forms and Records"). Study of forms for these purposes cannot be divorced from appraisal of procedures with which forms are used. Process charts, work distribution charts, work counts, and other techniques are often valuable for the study of procedures for the use of forms. Such analysis of forms and procedures aims at "work simplification."

Files Control. This is a program of improving office filing systems and methods to facilitate the use of office records, organizing the office filing systems to simplify the removal of office records for disposal or transfer to inactive storage, and controlling the flow of records into and out of office files. This program is the subject of MIS Report No. 115, dated August, 1953.

A Unified Records Management Program. Each of the above three programs can be conducted without the other two, but each is weaker without the simultaneous operation of the others because they are so closely inter-related. Best results are achieved for any organization if records management is conceived and operated for the total control over all records, from birth to death or permanent preservation. A unified program insures management that records exist and are used for control of operations, accountability to the public, and protection of legal rights of citizens and the government, without being cluttered by records which have outlived their useful retention periods. A unified records management program has implications for more effective and efficient operation of the entire organization.

Organization for Records Management

Like all programs for management improvement, the records management program is not self-executing. Directives and instructions will not jar departmental personnel out of familiar routines nor accomplish new objectives except as tools of a positive training program.

Neither department heads nor their supervisory employees can be expected to be proficient in studying and solving such paper work problems as designing forms, simplifying procedures, improving filing systems and methods, and appraising records for retention periods. Yet somebody in city hall should be. Management must supply especially trained staff to serve the records management needs of the operating departments, and thus to raise the standards of methods and of internal management controls.

The chief administrator should designate an official, hereafter called the records supervisor, to head up the program. He should preferably be a person with a keen interest in records management problems, knowledge of the techniques of administrative analysis, a high degree of analytical ability and creative

imagination, thorough knowledge of the municipal government, and skill in selling ideas and working with people.

In the largest cities, it is probably desirable to create a records management office, separate from budget and personnel offices. In large cities this program might well be staffed through the budget office. In medium-sized and smaller cities an assistant to the chief administrative officer might best be assigned this responsibility in addition to other duties.

The records supervisor works with all departments and supervisors and controls their work in his specialized field. This is especially true at the inception of the program, when departmental personnel have a possessive attitude toward "their" records and procedures. The records supervisor must gain their confidence through application of superior knowledge to departmental records problems and rely upon selling of ideas rather than upon his authority. It is best to proceed slowly, for leadership and salesmanship to prevail, than to proceed faster than departmental people are willing to follow.

Each department head should designate a records officer to work with the records supervisor for accomplishment of the program within his department. In very large departments, a full-time position of records officer may be justified in view of the importance of the program, while in smaller units the function of records officer will be a part-time responsibility. If the department is very small, the department head himself may have to handle most of the working contacts with the records supervisor.

The records officer is trained by the records supervisor to apply techniques of analysis to departmental records problems. If properly trained and enthusiastic, he becomes an invaluable aide to the records supervisor in accelerating accomplishment of the program.

Scope of Records Control Program

Records control relates to the retention and destruction of records and is a program comprising these basic steps:

1. Inventorying all existing records, both current and inactive.
2. Determining for each type of record its retention period and the form in which it shall be retained; that is: whether it must be preserved indefinitely, and if so whether it should be preserved in its original form or by microfilm or by both; and whether it can be destroyed; and if so how soon after its creation.
3. Determining for each type of record how long it should be kept in office or active files, and how long (if at all) it should be kept in storage or inactive files. The sum of these two periods equals the total retention period for the record.
4. Providing and operating a records center for the safe and economical custody of storage or inactive records, and provision of reference service for such records or the provision of alternative storage facilities for inactive records.
5. Disposing of records now retained beyond their retention periods, and continuous future application of retention periods to records.

6. Periodic review of retention periods in the light of reference ratios of storage or inactive records.

Types of Records. A useful distinction is one between "current records" and "storage records." The former are those which, for convenience, ready reference or other reason, are retained in office space and equipment of the department involved. The latter are those which need not be retained in office space and equipment of the department involved, but which must be, or should be, prudently preserved for a time or permanently, either in a records center or in alternative facilities for inactive records. This terminology will be used throughout this report.

Some Results of Records Control Installations. Any organization lacking a records control program inevitably accumulates large volumes of records which are retained long beyond retention periods required by law or useful for agency purposes. This has been demonstrated by numerous records control installations for government and private enterprise by the National Records Management Council.

For example, the federal records disposition program, resulting from the Hoover Commission studies, has resulted in annual savings in paper-work expense estimated at \$5,500,000. Federal agencies destroyed recently 2,500,000 cubic feet of records, or the equivalent of more than 1,600,000 file drawers. By June, 1952, they had reclaimed for active use some 57,000 file cabinets, 78,000 transfer cases, and 1,400,000 square feet of office and storage space, and had moved 1,300,000 cubic feet of papers to federal records centers.

These savings are comparable to those achieved in installations for the state of Michigan and for leading corporations throughout the country. The most variable factor is the proceeds from the sale of discarded records; while this has more than paid for many NRMC installations, variations in the price of scrap paper materially affect this saving.

A high ratio of accumulated records per employee is indicative of need for a records control program. The NRMC considers five cubic feet of records per employee as a favorable ratio for manufacturing and sales organizations. Certain city departments, particularly purchasing and accounting, accumulate records up to 15 and even 20 cubic feet per employee, but a records control program can bring the ratio down to about 10 to 1.

Low reference ratios (number of references divided by number of documents filed) are also indicative of need for records control. The NRMC has found that 95 per cent of all corporate paperwork over a year old is never referred to, and that 95 per cent of the references made are to papers less than five years old. An office management consultant has demonstrated that, for every 100 records filed, from 1 to 30 may be called back for reference. He considers the filing system good if the reference ratio is 100:20 or better; but if the ratio falls below 100:10, there is likelihood that separate or duplicate files exist; and if the reference ratio is close to 100:1, it is likely that the main files will be only dead storage.

Design of Records Center

The most significant recent development in the records control field is the design and development by the NRMC of records centers for the safe storage of inactive records at low cost. At the same time, better reference service is

provided than is possible when records are inefficiently stored. The availability of a properly designed records center is so important to the success of the entire records control program that the features of such a center will be described before other aspects of a records control program are discussed.

Location. The establishment of a record center has many advantages for the safe and economical storage of inactive records, improved reference service, positive records controls, and improvements in records management. These advantages would seem to justify whatever effort is required to establish a center.

Ideally, regional centers would be established throughout the country, either by the federal government or by private enterprise, to serve governments and businesses in their regions. As an alternative, the local governments in large metropolitan areas might contract together, possibly with state participation, to construct and operate such centers. In the meantime, most cities should be able to establish their own centers. These might be relatively temporary, for cities in larger metropolitan areas at least, and could readily be shifted to larger centers when available.

Cities in potential "target areas" should consider air attack in selecting the location of a records center. A location outside of populated areas is entirely feasible from the point of view of referral service which can be by phone or mail. Within urban areas, the center should be as far as possible from possible hazards of fire, explosion and flood. The center should be of reinforced fireproof construction with a sprinkler system. Air conditioning is desirable, if needed to maintain humidity at less than 60 per cent.

Any city which is planning a new city hall or library should consider a records center as an integral part of either facility. Creation of a records center even in an already crowded city hall is quite possible. It is possible to create a center and even leave some additional floor space available for new uses, because a substantial portion of existing floor area used for storage of records would be released through records disposal, while another portion would be reduced to perhaps one-fourth by increasing the density of storage. A center in the library with a librarian assuming responsibility for it on a part-time basis has much in its favor, particularly because a librarian is trained for the work.

If a city cannot establish a central records center, either because of lack of space or because of administrative difficulties, the space-saving advantages of the records center can be applied on a departmental basis to the inactive records of many different departments. Use of industrial steel shelving and special carton boxes, together with inventory controls over the contents of the numbered boxes, can solve some records storage problems on a decentralized basis.

Space Requirements and Equipment. The amount of floor space needed for a records center can be estimated before installing a records control program, by determining first the probable maximum cubic feet of records to be stored and second the probable density of storage per square foot of floor space.

It may be assumed that up to three cubic feet of records per employee should be stored in a records center. This is based upon the outside figures of 10 cubic feet of records per employee with 30 per cent being transferable to the records center.

Surveys by the NRMC indicate that conventional storage methods result in an average density of about one cubic foot of records per square foot of floor area used for records storage. In contrast, a properly designed records center can provide storage densities of from three to five cubic feet of records per square foot of floor area, depending on net useable ceiling heights and amount of aisle space allowed.

The first requisite for achieving this increase in storage density is a specially designed cardboard box, measuring 10" high (for file folders standing upright), 12" wide (for letter-size folders) and 15" long (for legal size folders.) It has a cover and is double-walled for strength and water absorption. It has been tested for 150 minutes with a sprinkler system operating without permitting moisture to reach its records; thus, records stored in it will not be damaged by water if flooding is limited and records can be transferred to new boxes. The box comes folded flat, and can be opened for use in an instant; thus it can be carried easily to filing cabinets where contents are to be emptied. When full, it weighs 25 to 30 pounds.

These boxes are entirely practical for long-term storage under conditions of infrequent reference, as compared with conventional transfer cases, and are much easier to handle and store compactly. They are available from the Business Archives Center, 337 West 27th Street, New York 1, N. Y.

The second requisite for high density storage is standard steel shelving, with 42"x40" shelf area and 22" vertical height between shelves. This permits storage of six boxes on each level and two levels per shelf. Depending on ceiling heights, stacks 95" high can be used for five shelves and 10 levels of boxes to an over-all height of 119"; or 118" stacks can be used for six shelves and 12 levels to an over-all height of 132". Vertical spacing between shelves can be varied if books and bound volumes are to be stored without use of boxes. The shelving (known as "industrial steel shelving") is available through many suppliers, at a cost of about \$32 delivered and erected for 95" five-shelf stacks.

Aisles of 30-inch width are adequate between rows of stacks except that an aisle about 60 inches wide is needed through the center of a large floor area. Stacks can be arranged in single, double or even triple rows between aisles depending on the probable frequency of reference.

Ceiling height of 10-12 feet is desirable, and the floor loading capacity should be 175 pounds per sq. ft. or more, or sufficient to hold 25-30 pounds per box stored. The floor area should be as open as possible for most advantageous arrangement of the steel stacks. Facilities for preferential protection of a relatively small quantity of the most vital records is desirable.

The center should have a truck driveway with an unloading platform protected from weather; and the platform should be close to the processing area where records are handled, screened and processed for storage. A small office space is needed for the necessary inventory control records, and for use of persons wishing to study records. Telephone ducts should be installed for reference service. Specially designed ladders and small hand trucks facilitate access to the boxes.

Storage densities can be estimated on the basis of net ceiling heights of storage space available. Ceiling heights of at least 119 inches and 132 inches permit storage of ten and twelve boxes respectively. These in turn produce

6.86 and 8.23 boxes per square foot of floor area used by stacks (a 42"x30" stack requires 8.75 sq. ft. of area, divided by 60 or 72 boxes). Although each box measures 1.04 cubic ft. in capacity, it can be considered as an even cubic foot for simplicity of calculations. The densities of 6.86 and 8.23 boxes per sq. foot of area occupied by stacks must be reduced by one-half to one-third depending primarily on whether one or two rows of stacks lie between each 30" aisle.

Dividing the estimated total cubic footage of records to be stored at the center by the estimated density per square foot of gross floor area gives a rough estimate of the size of floor area required.

Costs for Records Center. The capital cost of a scientifically designed records center building is slightly over \$3 per cubic foot of storage capacity. This is demonstrated by the construction in 1951 of the records center for the General Electric Company's Hanford Atomic Energy Works, the first new construction designed exclusively for records storage purposes. The building cost \$115,500 and equipment \$16,000; the total cost of \$131,500 equalled \$3.06 for each of the 43,000 cubic feet of records which can be housed.

The National Records Management Council has estimated that the cost of a typical four-drawer file cabinet (excluding clerical costs) runs from \$28 to \$34 per year. This estimate includes amortization of the file cabinet, rental value of the floor space, and overhead and maintenance. The NRMC estimates that the same volume of records can be stored in a well designed center at a cost of \$2.51 per year.

City officials may make their own rough estimates of potential dollar savings which would result from adoption of a records control program and establishment of a record center. Data supplied below is based upon average findings of the NRMC in over 50 installations for government and business enterprises. City officials need only supply data concerning the number of employees of their cities, and local scrap paper and floor rental prices, to complete their preliminary estimates.

1. Volume of records to be handled: (a) currently on hand: 8-10 cu. ft. per employee; (b) probable dispositions: 30-50 per cent to be destroyed, 15-30 per cent to be transferred to records center, and 25-40 per cent to be retained in office spaces.

2. Savings through release of facilities resulting from disposal and transfer of records: (a) office floor space: 1 sq. ft. per cu. ft. of records at local rental value (this is an annual saving); (b) filing cabinets: one 4-drawer file cabinet per 6 cu. ft. of records, at average market value of \$80-\$100 per cabinet (this is a one-time saving); (c) waste paper sales: about 80 cu. ft. per ton, at local price for scrap paper.

Microfilm vs. Storage. Microfilming, when done under contract and including both photographing and developing, costs about \$5.00 to \$7.50 per 1000 8-1/2 x 11 inch documents, depending upon their condition and the work necessary to prepare them for filming. Thus, it costs from \$10 to \$15 to microfilm the 2,000 letter size records which, with their file folders, can be stored in the standard storage box at the records center. The same records can be stored in the original form for 10 to 15 years in a records center for about the same cost as for microfilming. Considerable work, however, is often necessary to sort and arrange records before microfilming, so that they can be readily found

after microfilming. This cost is not included in the above estimate. Obviously, only unusual circumstances justify microfilming records which need not be kept permanently.

Companies selling microfilming equipment claim that reference to records is faster after they have been microfilmed than before. This is true if, preceding records control, inactive records have been stored in relatively inaccessible places. The NRMC, however, believes that records finding is faster in its new records center than finding the specific record on its particular reel of film.

Microfilming may well be justified, however, for records which must be retained permanently. In such cases, three alternatives are possible:

1. The original records are destroyed after microfilming and only the film is used for reference purposes.
2. The original record is retained for reference purposes, but the microfilm is stored in a secure location in order to replace the original documents if they should be lost or damaged.
3. Two microfilms are prepared and the original documents are destroyed. One film is used for reference purposes, while the other is stored for security purposes.

The principal advantage of microfilming is its saving in space, which runs as high as 99:1 in savings of floor space and 160:1 in cubic dimensions of filing cabinets. Film also lasts indefinitely--as long as the best rag paper--and can be duplicated before it deteriorates. Microfilms are increasingly admissible under state laws as evidence in court in lieu of the original records, but precautions must be taken to authenticate the films when original records are destroyed.

Organization for Records Control

Authorization by Ordinance. The records control program should be authorized by ordinance. It is necessary first to examine state law to determine the degree of state and local authority for the retention and destruction of individual records.

The ordinance should leave the determination of retention periods to appropriate administrative officers. The San Francisco ordinance authorizing a records control program places responsibility on each department head for preparing schedules for systematic disposition of records. In practice this responsibility is being exercised first by consulting NRMC staff. It will later be exercised by the superintendent of records designated by the ordinance, with tentative disposition schedules being submitted to department heads for review and approval.

It is appropriate for most cities to place responsibility for determination of retention periods upon two officials: the records supervisor (as that term is used in this report) and the department head. The ordinance may then provide for clearance with the city attorney, a city historian or librarian, and other officials as appropriate.

Duties of Records Supervisor. It was suggested above in the section "Organization for Records Management" that a records supervisor be designated to

supervise either a broad records management program or the more limited records control program here described. A records supervisor has the following specific duties in records control:

1. To determine in consultation with department heads and others as appropriate the retention periods for individual departmental records.
2. To make appropriate investigations in departments in order to formulate records control policies and procedures.
3. To train and supervise departmental records officers so as to accomplish the objectives of records control within the departments, and to prepare manuals of procedure for their guidance.
4. To review requisitions for purchase of new filing equipment, and to investigate whether need for such purchases can be eliminated through improvements in filing of current records or through disposal or transfer to the records center of current records.
5. To supervise the establishment and operation of the records center.
6. To make the initial installation of the records control program, or to work with an outside consultant employed to make the installation.

Duties of Records Officers. Departmental records officers have the following specific duties in records control:

1. To represent the department head in contacts with the records supervisor and to work with the latter in accomplishing records control objectives in his department.
2. To review departmental requisitions for new filing equipment, and to recommend purchases only after ascertaining that existing equipment cannot be released by disposal or transfer of current records to the records center.
3. To recommend to the department head and the records supervisor desirable changes in retention periods of departmental records and to apply existing retention schedules to current records.
4. To train and supervise any other departmental employees concerned with records control.
5. To participate in the initial installation of records control.

Alternatives for Initial Records Installation. The best method of securing an installation with maximum speed and results is to employ an organization experienced in such installations. The National Records Management Council, 50 East 42nd Street, New York, and Record Controls, Inc., 209 South LaSalle Street, Chicago, are organizations specializing in this field. Other well-qualified organizations for this work are Globe-Wernicke Co., Remington Rand, Inc., and Shaw Walker Co. The latter three companies have offices in principal cities. While employment of a consultant costs more initially, the superior results more than compensate for the extra cost. Full advantage should be taken of the opportunity to have city personnel trained by the consultant for records control responsibilities.

When the work must be done by the city instead of a consultant, best results can be achieved by having the inventory of records made by an employee assigned to and trained by the records supervisor. One employee working full-time can handle the job easily in most cities. If no incumbent employee can be assigned to the job, employment of additional help should be justified in view of the monetary savings resulting from the initial installation.

Establishment of Retention Periods

Standards for Evaluation. The NRMC applies five standards for the evaluation of records for retention, transfer and disposal for which they use the code name "VALVE":

Value	- Operating and historical
Activity	- Rate of reference
Law	- Federal and state statutes
Volume	- Cost versus value
Experience	- Comparable company practices

The National Archives suggests four standards for evaluation:

1. Values for administrative, legal and fiscal uses by the agency.
2. Values for the protection of the civic, legal, property and other rights of citizens.
3. Values for purposes of functional documentation of agency organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations or other activities.
4. Values for research purposes.

Federal and state legal requirements for retention are absolute and cannot be modified by local action. State laws, however, may be out of date and unrealistic, and should be modified where possible through action by state leagues of municipalities. Laws may require certain retention periods for some specific records, while general statutes of limitation may be applicable to other records. Some professional organizations have published guides for retention periods of typical records. One of these is entitled "The Disposal and Preservation of Public Records," Special Bulletin 1925C, issued by the Municipal Finance Officers Association.

Leading businesses are increasingly comparing the costs of retaining and maintaining records with the possible costs which might result from claims or legal actions against them for which there would be no defense because of records destruction. Such comparisons have led some companies to drastic reductions in retention periods. The paper work cost of systems maintained to permit post-audit review of employee honesty may well be measured against potential losses.

Sears, Roebuck & Company, for example, has for 35 years been sending the customer's original order and the company's bill right back with the goods asked for, retaining only a record of the total bill and taking the risk of having to refill the orders of customers who claim they did not receive shipments. This has been found to be "very practical." Another company, whose employees collect as much as \$500,000 daily, deposits the money in a lump sum

without retaining the identity of individual collections. Since 1949, bank charges for counterfeit bills or shortages have cost the company less than \$250 per year, while the company has saved as much as \$20,000 annually in banking charges in addition to its own substantial paper-work savings.

Retention of records by businesses is largely to protect their own interests, while retention of many records by government is largely for the protection of citizens. Hence government cannot go as far as business in this respect. The risk-taking on records retention by progressive business management suggests, however, that governments should apply the same policy as far as possible.

Evaluation of Form Records. The bulk of a city's form records consist of printed and duplicated forms which should be distinguished for purposes of inventory and evaluation from non-form records. The following procedures apply to forms, and also to standardized and recurring reports of various types (e.g. monthly and annual financial and activity reports).

A careful physical inventory is made of all the city's form records, regardless of present location. The central file of forms maintained under the forms control program provides an excellent guide to the current forms which must be accounted for in the inventory.

A Record Inventory sheet (see supplement to this report) is used for each type of form at each location. These are then sorted alphabetically by form title, to bring together sheets for a single form in the possession of a single department. A Record Control card (see supplement to this report) is then attached to the one or more Record Inventory sheets for a form.

For each multi-copy form used by two or more departments, it is necessary to determine which department is the most important one, or the best choice, to retain the "record" copy. That department is designated as the "record department" and other copies and their departments are then considered as "non-record."

Many forms are used by all departments, especially in personnel and finance, and must be analyzed as record and non-record copies. These city-wide forms should be appraised before any other forms so that disposal schedules may be applied to all non-record copies in the various departments.

Retention periods of record and non-record copies are determined separately. Those of record copies are determined under the general procedure outlined above. Retention periods for non-record copies, however, do not require legal or historical clearance, may not even be cleared with heads of non-record departments unless their preferences are significant for their operating needs, and can be short enough so that non-record copies are never transferred to the records center.

The following steps are taken in appraising and clearing each form for retention, in relation to the standards for evaluation described above. A high rating on any single standard may be controlling in determining a long retention period, even if other values are low: a retention period is not determined merely by the average of values of a record. In each case, consideration must be given to the retention period in the office as a "current record," in the records center as a "storage record," and in microfilm at the records center.

1. Clearance with Department Head. The records supervisor confers with the records officer, the principal employee using the form, and the department head, to determine the desirable retention period for operating needs only. The records supervisor generally accepts the retention periods recommended, which are usually longer than he believes necessary, because reference ratios will later be used for shortening retention periods.
2. Clearance with City Attorney. With the assistance of the city attorney as needed, the records supervisor determines legally required retention periods and enters such information on Record Control cards.
3. Clearance with City Historian. The records supervisor determines which forms have a possible historical value, and clears them with a city historian (if any) or the city librarian.
4. Re-clearance with Department Heads. Before forms stored in offices are disposed of or transferred to the records center, the records officer and department head are given a final opportunity to consider such disposition and to recommend changes in retention periods.

Office retention periods will not be uniform for all forms. A form with a long total retention period may advantageously be transferred to the records center after one or two years. Another form with a total retention period of only three years, may better be retained in office storage if not too bulky, to avoid the expense of transferring it to the records center. For this reason, it may be advisable to make some provision for storage of inactive records in office spaces.

Reference ratios on storage records provide objective evidence of reference values. For many records lacking legal retention periods, reference ratios will be the sole or major standard governing retention periods. Periodically, the records supervisor and department head should review retention periods in the light of the reference experience entered on the Record Control cards. The National Records Management Council has found that reference ratios run about one reference per four cubic feet of records per year when records are first transferred to a records center. Continuous review and reduction of retention periods often improves the reference ratio to about one reference per one cubic foot of records per year.

Evaluation of Non-Form Records. Correspondence, memos, reports and similar non-form records, comprising the "subject files" present the most difficult problem in the development of retention periods. The procedures described above for clearing proposed retention periods of form records with department heads, the city attorney and the city historian or librarian apply also to non-form records. The distinction between record and non-record copies and departments is equally applicable to form and non-form records.

It is helpful to use the Record Inventory form to ascertain the volume, location, age and general subject matter of active and inactive non-form records to be appraised and handled. It is much more difficult to describe and appraise the contents of a file drawer when it stores non-form records, even if they are reasonably homogeneous as to subject matter and age, than when it stores forms.

The approach to the appraisal of subject files lies not through analysis of Record Control cards but through analysis of the subject classification of the files. Procedures for filing classification and control are described in MIS Report No. 115, "Management of a Municipal Filing System".

If non-form records are properly filed under subject classification, their retention periods are automatically determined without need for individual decisions by file clerks or by employees originating correspondence and other non-form records. It may be desirable with the subject files to delay initial determination of retention periods until some reference ratio data has been acquired, because of the more difficult judgments involved as compared with appraising form records for retention. Retention periods once established for the various subjects of the subject classification must then be applied to current and inactive files. This is a slower process than the application of retention periods to form records.

Disposition and Transfer of Records

The following discussion is related primarily to the handling of form records. The problem of appraising subject files for retention and of organizing subject files for disposition are discussed in MIS Report No. 115, "Management of a Municipal Filing System."

When retention periods are determined by the initial appraisal, these are applied to the records identified on Record Inventory forms which have been attached to Record Control cards during the appraisal process. Entries are made on the Record Inventory forms to indicate precisely which records are to be disposed of and which are to be transferred to the records center. The Record Inventory forms are then detached from the Record Control cards, and are sorted into location sequence. The persons who inventoried the records then attach tags to the records containers using one color for disposal and another color for transfer.

Disposal of records is handled through the purchasing agent, who negotiates for their sale. The sale contract should require the buyer to shred or burn any records having a confidential character. Record Inventory forms pertaining to such records are delivered to the records center to indicate the disposal action taken.

Records to be transferred to the records center are repacked in the standard cardboard boxes. Finding storage records at the center will be easier if attention is given to the logical segregation of types of records before they are packed in storage boxes. The files control program should therefore establish a system for filing office records which permits the easy transfer of records from office file cabinets to storage boxes. When records are first transferred after the initial inventory, it may be advisable to re-group records from this point of view before re-packing them; later transfers should not involve re-grouping if the filing system is properly planned.

Storage boxes are identified at the records center only by an assigned number. A choice must be made between sending departments pre-numbered boxes in blocks of consecutive numbers, or of assigning numbers upon receipt of the boxes at the center. In either case, the boxes are carefully identified in relation to the Record Inventory forms.

Card records, books and other records which do not conform to letter and legal size folders are packed in the standard boxes if possible. However, large volumes and other non-standard materials not suitably packed in the boxes are sent to the center for storage on open shelves.

Disposal of storage records by the records center is made periodically by reference to Record Control cards, on which entries are made recording each disposal action. Transfer of current records to the center may also be initiated by periodic preparation from the Record Control cards of schedules which are sent to the departments. It may be simpler, however, to prepare departmental transfer schedules, so that the departments may initiate transfers of current records. Accession of transferred records is recorded on the Record Control cards.

Departments may also initiate disposal of non-record copies of forms and of other current records, whose retention periods are so short that their transfer to the center is not justified. A disposal schedule for all city-wide forms, showing in two columns the retention periods for record and non-record copies, may be duplicated for use by all departments. The disposal schedule for departmental records, however, must be individually prepared for each department.

The records supervisor prepares all transfer and disposal schedules. These may be incorporated into a procedures manual governing the entire records management program. Each department's individual transfer and disposal schedule may be advantageously combined, and the records supervisor retains copies for his reference.

Record Control cards provide a continuous history of the accession of current records for storage and of their disposal. No such history is maintained, however, of departmental disposal of current records. The disposal schedules themselves provide a sufficient record of disposal actions, and the short retention periods of such records do not warrant the keeping of individual records of disposal actions on the Record Control cards.

Records Center Operations

Record Control cards are arranged in a visible file first by department, second by major divisions (if any), and third by name of record, alphabetically. A companion Record Disposal card (see supplement to this report), which is placed in the same file, indicates the location of records and the history of disposal actions taken. Box numbers, which are also the location code, are entered on the Record Disposal cards before the boxes are stacked on the shelves.

Box numbers are assigned to consecutive stacks in blocks equal to the box capacity of each stack. Thus, a ten-level stack is numbered 1-60, 61-120, etc., and stacks are identified by appropriate signs containing such numbers. Boxes are uniformly stacked, with low numbers on bottom shelves and high numbers at the top, and with odd numbers behind the immediately following even numbers. Pages of serial number check lists in a loose-leaf binder maintain control over numbers assigned and numbers available for use.

Non-standard materials which must be stored outside of boxes on open shelves are assigned the same numbers that would be assigned to standard boxes that might otherwise fit into the same space.

A triplicate Record Reference form (see supplement to this report) is prepared either by a department requesting a reference in writing, or by the records center in response to a phone request by a department. Then the records center finds the appropriate Record Control and Record Disposal cards, enters from the latter onto the Record Reference form the box number for the record, locates the

record, and gives information about it over the phone or sends the record by messenger or mail to the department.

If the reference is completed by phone, a copy of the Record Reference is filed by department and type of record. If the record is sent to the department, a copy of the Record Reference is attached to it for use as a routing slip, another copy is filed with the Record Control card, and the third is filed by date in a follow-up file. Upon return of the record, one copy of the Record Reference is filed and the other destroyed.

Annual tabulations of reference ratios for each year of each record are prepared from the Record Reference forms and may be entered on the Record Control cards. Comparison of reference ratios with retention periods, as mentioned previously, should lead to systematic reduction of retention periods for many records until minimum needed periods are achieved.

Note: A bibliography on records management and filing is available to MIS subscribers on request, and the San Francisco ordinance establishing a records management program will be sent on loan to MIS subscribers.

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Supplement to MIS Report No. 114

FORMS USED IN INVENTORY AND CONTROL OF RECORDS

The instructions below apply to the four basic forms for records control shown on pages 819 and 820 of this report. These forms can be adapted for use in any city.

Record Inventory. One form is completed for each type of record found in each location. Entries are made as follows:

Item 1. Use descriptive title.

Item 2. Identify location by building and room number.

Item 3. Describe the record fully.

Items 4 and 5. Enter names of organizational units which originate the record or which last controlled the record.

Item 6. Enter the type of filing arrangement, or describe the sequence in which the records are stored.

Item 7. Enter the number of the types of equipment shown in items 8 and 9.

Item 8. Enter description of filing cabinets, such as "4-dr. legal", or "3 dr. letter size".

Item 9. Enter the type of construction, i.e. wood, metal, cardboard.

Item 10. Enter from a previously prepared table the cubic footage capacity of the file container. If the container is not filled to capacity, enter a second figure estimating the cubic feet of records stored in it.

Item 11. Enter a number or letter identifying the file container, and a letter or number identifying the drawer. A number of file containers may be identified briefly.

Item 12. Enter the beginning and ending dates covered by the records.

Item 13. Enter beginning and ending serial numbers or other identifying information.

Item 14 and 15. After the retention period is determined and entered on the Record Control card, it is applied to the records identified on the Record Inventory, by checking "disposal" in column 14 or "transfer" in column 15. Records for the period identified on a single line may be subject to both types of action.

Item 16. The employee taking the action enters his initials.

Record Control. This card is completed as follows:

Items 3-11 are used for entry of retention periods, approvals and the date of such approvals. The original retention periods are entered on the first line, and revised retention periods are entered on succeeding lines.

Items 12-16 are used for entry of reference ratios derived from periodical analysis of Record Reference forms. Item 12 may be used for dates or periods. Items 13-16 might be headed "1st" year, "2-5" years, "6-10" years, and "over 10 years", respectively; for records retained for shorter periods of time, other appropriate headings might be used. Horizontal lines are used for entries for successive annual or other periods used in statistical analysis.

Record Disposal. Entries are made as follows:

Items 1 and 2. The same as items 19 and 20 of the Record Control card.

Item 3. The inclusive dates of the records are entered.

Item 4. Same as item 13 of the Record Inventory.

Item 5. Enter the numbers of the boxes in which records are stored at the record center.

Item 6. Enter the date of disposal.

Item 7. Enter initials of the employee disposing of the records.

For records transferred to the records center, entries are made in items 3, 4 and 5; their later disposal results in entries in items 6 and 7. Entries are made in items 3, 4, 6, and 7 for record copies of records disposed of by a department without transfer to the records center.

Record Reference. This is a triplicate form, and items are self-explanatory. If used by a department as a written request for reference service, all items except 5, 6, 7, and 10 are entered. If used by the records center for a phone request, all items except 6 and 7 are entered. The remaining entries in each case are made later as appropriate.

RECORD INVENTORY

RECORD CONTROL											
1. Legal Retention and Source							2. Microfilm				
							<input type="checkbox"/> Yes		<input type="checkbox"/> Retain Original		
RETENTION PERIODS			APPROVALS					REFERENCE RATIOS			
Office	Records	Total	Records	Dept.	Legal			Date			
3	Center	5	Super.	Head	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
17. Remarks											
18. Record Description											
19. Record Title									20. Department and Division		

[illegible]

R E Q U E S T B Y	1. Department and Division		2. Requester
	3. Address		4. Date
	5. Follow-Up Date	6. Date Returned	7. Received by
C O M P L E T E D E S C R I P T I O N O F R E C O R D S 8		D A T E 9	I D E N T . N O . 10
R E C O R D R E F E R E N C E			